

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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19 November 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

Arnold Nachmanoff

SUBJECT:

Cuban Approach to New York Times Reporter
Tad Szulc

I have been informed by Bob Hurwitch, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, that Tad Szulc of The New York Times called State Department press man, Bob McCloskey, and related the following last week:

Szulc was asked by the Nos. 2 and 3 men at the Cuban UN Mission, during a luncheon conversation, whether he would like to play the "role of John Scali" in bringing about a normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States. Szulc laughed off the idea, but the Cubans returned to it later and invited him to come to Cuba. Szulc told them he could not come to Cuba before the beginning of next year, and they said that would be fine. Szulc reportedly will see the Cubans again at another social occasion soon, and they led him to believe that this matter would be raised again.

Hurwitch told me he would be briefing John Irwin on the story yesterday. He noted that it was interesting that Szulc called McCloskey rather than substantive people in ARA, with whom he has good contacts. Hurwitch believes Szulc was showing some sensitivity in not trying to put substantive officers on the spot for some kind of reaction.

There have been several other indications that the Cubans might be interested in seeking improved relations with the U. S.

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Moreover, State Department people who have talked with the Swiss and Belgian Ambassadors to Cuba tell me that they believe Castro is interested in finding a way to improve relations with the U. S. (The British Ambassador, however, recently commented that he did not believe Castro wanted to or could afford to improve relations with the United States, since it would undercut his use of an external scapegoat and his revolutionary mystique.)

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DOS Review Completed.

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I think it is also worth noting that the reportedly Cuban approach to Tad Szulc came shortly after Kosygin's visit to Cuba. (I have not discussed the Soviet aspect with Hal Sonnenfeldt, but will do so if you wish.) It is conceivable that: (a) Kosygin pushed Castro to try to improve relations with the U.S. as a way to emerge from economic stagnation and reduce the Soviet financial burden of sustaining an unviable economy; or (b) Castro was not persuaded that the Soviets would not sell Cuba out when President Nixon visits Moscow, and that therefore he is seeking some maneuvering room for himself before then. It is also interesting to note that the reported approach comes at a time when Castro is visiting Chile, may stop over in Peru and Ecuador on his way back, and has announced that he will be making a series of visits to Eastern Europe. Castro probably feels that the conditions are right for Cuba to break out of its isolation.

With regard to Szulc, Hurwitch proposes that we say nothing further to him, but see what, if anything, the Cubans do to pursue the initial approach. I believe that is correct, but I will, of course convey any other views that you might have. You may wish to discuss this with Irwin. We have not had a recent policy review on Cuba, as you know. We could attempt to update NSSM 32, which was prepared in 1969 and then put on the shelf. This would create quite a bit of attention in the bureaucracy, however, and would further fuel expectations among the Latins that we are contemplating a change in policy. You might want to consider (as Pete Vaky suggested a year ago) therefore a very low visibility study conducted by a small ad hoc group.

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